

The Empire and Christianity

33^J

and adoration, to regard every office, however mental, attached to his person, as sacred. In speaking of the Emperor language was strained to the pitch of the ridiculous ; flattery became so grotesque that it must have ceased to flatter. When Nazarius, for example, speaks of the Emperor's heart as ⁴ⁱ the stupendous shrine of mighty virtues'*(*ingentium mrtutum stnpenda penetralia*), and such language as this became the recognised mode of addressing the reigning Sovereign, we see how far we have travelled not only from Republican simplicity, but even from the times of Domitian. The Emperor, in brief, was absolute monarch, autocrat of the entire Roman world, and his will and nod were law*

He stood at the head of a hierarchy of court and administrative officials, most minutely organised from the highest to the lowest. For purposes of Imperial administration, those next to the throne were the four Praetorian prefects, each one supreme, under the Emperor, in his quarter of the world. The Empire had been divided by Diocletian into twelve dioceses and these again into ninety-six provinces; Constantino accepted this division but apportioned the twelve dioceses into four prefectures, those of the Orient, Illyria, Italy, and Gaul. The four Praetorian prxfects stood in relation to the Emperor—so Eusebius tells us—as God the Son stood in relation to God the Father. They wore[™] though not perhaps in the days of Constantino— robes of purple reaching to the knee; they rode in lofty chariots, and among the insignia of their office were a colossal silver inkstand and gold pen-cases of